



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

Olive Schreiner, Sociology and the Company She Kept

Citation for published version:

Stanley, L 2015, Olive Schreiner, Sociology and the Company She Kept. in A Law & E Royal Lybeck (eds), *Sociological Amnesia: Cross-currents in Disciplinary History.*, 6, Classical and Contemporary Social Theory, Ashgate Publishing, Abingdon, Oxon, pp. 89-105.

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

Sociological Amnesia

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



Olive Schreiner, Sociology and the Company She Kept

Liz Stanley

Olive Schreiner and Sociology: Opening Thoughts

The South African feminist writer and social theorist Olive Schreiner (1855-1920), who lived in Britain for long periods as well as South Africa, was in her day one of the world's most famous people.¹ The 'company she kept' in a literal network sense included many well-known figures in Sociology and other social sciences and her analytical concerns are clearly of sociological import – and yet there were at the time and still are now issues concerning where and how to locate her in relation to Sociology as a body of ideas and a way of thinking, and also as a discipline. In exploring the whys and wherefores of this, the 'company she kept' will also be explored in more complex figurational terms of her associational connections and their political and ethical grounding.

Schreiner's publications convey the range of her concerns and indicate the analytic connections shared with Sociology.² These include a ground-breaking novel (*The Story of an African Farm*, 1883), two collections of socialist and feminist allegories (*Dreams*, 1891; *Dream Life and Real Life* 1893), a powerful critique of Cecil Rhodes and his imperialist activities in a scandalous 'magic realist' novella (*Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*, 1897), a number of ground-breaking political economy essays (*The Political Situation*, 1896; *An English South African's View*, 1899; *Closer Union*, 1909) and a best-selling volume of feminist theory (*Women and Labour*, 1911), and they put her firmly on the international intellectual and political map. After Schreiner's death, posthumous publications included two more novels (*From Man to Man* 1923; *Undine*, 1929), another collection of allegories

¹ For background and Schreiner as a proto social scientist, see Stanley, 2002.

² For bibliographic information on all Schreiner publications, see the Essential Schreiner/Schreiner's Publications page of the *Olive Schreiner Letters Online* at www.oliveschreiner.org.

(*Stories, Dreams and Allegories*, 1923) and a volume of essays analysing the racial dynamics of polity and economy in South Africa (*Thoughts on South Africa*, 1923).

Schreiner wrote in and across a number of genre forms, with all her publications containing a strong element of social theorising, as also do her nearly 5,000 extant letters (published in full in the *Olive Schreiner Letters Online* at www.oliveschreiner.org; see also Stanley and Salter, 2014). Schreiner's political and social as well as literary contributions were widely praised by contemporaries, including Herbert Spencer, W.E. Gladstone, Charles Dilke, Keir Hardie, and later J.A. Hobson, Leonard Hobhouse, Bertrand Russell and Norman Angell in Britain and Jane Addams and Charlotte Perkins Gillman in the US; and were also acknowledged by those on the receiving end of her social analysis and critique, including Cecil Rhodes, Jan Smuts and Lloyd George. Schreiner's analytical concerns include the economic base and its implications for divisions of labour; the relationship between political, economic and social hierarchies; the three great 'questions' of labour, gender and 'race'; imperialism and its violent exploitations; forms of governance and their implications for libertarian politics; autocracy and the causes and consequences of increasingly industrial forms of warfare; and social justice and how a better future might come into being.

These matters are undoubtedly also among the concerns of Sociology, with the sociological company Schreiner kept featuring some high-profile names. They include: Hebert Spencer, whose *First Principles* she was initially influenced by and later recoiled from and with whom she later maintained a friendly relationship while she lived in England and subsequently. Karl Marx, who she met via his daughter Eleanor during the last months of his life and with her social care theory of value in *Women and Labour* in some measure a rejection of the Marxian one. Karl Pearson, a friend in the days of his socialist as well as social science concerns with social ethics, but whose emotionally frozen rationalism she disliked. John Atkinson Hobson, an economist-cum-economic sociologist with whom she

shared many ideas about imperialism, war and pacifism. Leonard Hobhouse, regarding his critical engagement with imperialism, including in *Democracy and Reaction* (1904) and *Liberalism* (1911). And the US sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois, whose ideas about 'race' were a particular influence on her thinking in the mid 1900s.

At her death, Schreiner's reputation and stature seemed assured. Subsequently, in some areas of UK Sociology her work, particularly regarding imperialism (her influence on Hobson's theory of imperialism, and his on Lenin's) and also women and work, had considerable impact. Indeed, as late as the 1970s, *Women and Labour* appeared on some undergraduate Sociology reading lists, together with her younger friend Alice Clark's (1919) *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century*, and Hobson's *The War in South Africa* (1900) and *Imperialism* (1902), with Hobson's *War* featuring an interview with Schreiner (concerning the actual feelings of the Boer population, rather than as reported in the press). But with hindsight this was a swan-song occurring in departments with strong economic sociology inclinations, like Manchester University's Department of Sociology, where I encountered it in the late 1970s as a new lecturer. Few sociologists between then and now would have placed Schreiner's work within the expanding sociological canon because, ironically, it was displaced from reconsideration by contemporary feminist writings at the very point when reassessment might have occurred.

Subsequently, however, the decline of a 'commanding heights' view of Sociology and accompanying rise of diversity and areas of specialism has enabled a broader range of sociological ideas and positions to be recognised, and to some extent Schreiner's work has benefitted from this. Indeed, in terms of intellectual distinction on an international and interdisciplinary level, Olive Schreiner is clearly 'a winner', with new editions of her major books still appearing supported by an international interdisciplinary industry of Schreiner interpreters at work within contemporary academic feminism. But while a good case can be

made for the relevance of her theorising, she is still largely forgotten as a sociologist, or rather as someone who might, or might not, 'belong' to Sociology, both as constituted across the period of her life-time, and also in the present-day. But of course this begs the questions of what Sociology was and is and where its boundaries lie – and who is seen as legislating these matters and consequently who is seen to produce key sociological ideas.

What follows explores these matters of borders, boundaries and not/belonging regarding Sociology and the relationship of this to 'the company she kept', focusing on Olive Schreiner and her work. The discussion starts with her links with Spencer, Hobson, Hobhouse and Du Bois.

Sociological Company She Kept

The earliest known intellectual influence on Schreiner was sociological in character and came from Herbert Spencer's (1862) *First Principles*. She encountered this 1871 while staying with her aunt Elizabeth, married to the missionary Samuel Rolland. The Rollands lived at Beersheba on the frontier of the now-Lesotho, and a chance passing visitor left his copy of *First Principles* with her. Its impact was profound although not perhaps quite what Spencer might have wanted, for in 1895 Schreiner wrote to a friend that, while it had showed her that systems of political and ethical thought could replace religious ones, she had rejected its mechanism and had to 'transmute' this into workable ideas (OS to Betty Molteno, 24 May 1895; see *Olive Schreiner Letters Online*) The 'social organism' aspect of Spencer's thinking and his ideas concerning increasing social complexity attracted Schreiner. However, *contra* Spencer, she rejected a 'progress' view of social change over time, with her eye remaining on what she termed the 'backwards' and 'downwards' movements that occurred, while the strong individualistic emphasis in Spencer's thinking

and his rejection of state 'interference' are poles apart from Schreiner's communitarian and socialist-federalist stance (Stanley, 2002; Mingardi, 2013; Francis and Taylor 2014).

During the first period she lived in Britain (end 1881 to late 1889) and on subsequent visits, Schreiner and Spencer became personally acquainted and she remained grateful for her early encounter with his work. Later, each referred appreciatively to the other's public rejection of Britain's provocation of war in South Africa (1899-1902), and Schreiner valued Spencer's linking of imperialism with war. Spencer's last public activities included his active opposition to the war in public statements and writings, while Schreiner's many high-profile writings and political activities in this respect led to her confinement under martial law for most of the war's duration (Spencer, 1902; Stanley and Salter, 2014: 130-60). The appreciation was mutual, shown by Spencer donating to the fund that helped Schreiner when her Johannesburg house was destroyed in 1900 by fire-bombing, with Schreiner commenting, 'that dear old Herbert Spencer who has meant so much to me since I was a girl, should have contributed' (OS to Mary Brown, 9 January 1901; see *Olive Schreiner Letters Online*); and in 1903 when Spencer was dying, he had favoured passages in *The Story of an African Farm* read to him.

The South African War witnessed other connections between Schreiner's social theorising and Sociology, through her connections with Leonard Hobhouse (Owen, 1975) and John Atkinson Hobson (Cain, 2002), both then working for the *Manchester Guardian*, the major anti-war British newspaper of the day. Among other things, overtures were made for Schreiner to act as a special correspondent and, via Hobson's involvement in the South African Conciliation Committee, an invitation was issued for her to carry out an anti-war speaking tour (for health reasons, she refused). The social reformer Emily Hobhouse became a friend of Schreiner's and Schreiner certainly communicated with and shared some political views with Leonard Hobhouse, Emily's brother, who in 1907 became Britain's first

professor of Sociology. However, the closer political and intellectual affiliation, and the one with greater longevity, was with Hobson.

This is indicated with Schreiner's literal presence in Hobson's *The War in South Africa* of 1900, and also because her thinking underpins the analysis in his *Imperialism* of 1902. Hobson's intellectual contributions were cross-disciplinary in approach and interdisciplinary in formation, with important conceptual ideas including under-consumption, marginal productivity and the concept of imperialism in its academic formulation owed to him. Although Hobson is often described as an economist, he can with equal justification be termed an economic sociologist. By the 1920s and 30s, his closest associations were with economic sociology and the sociology of work, and he was closely involved in pre-1939 planning to expand Sociology around economic sociology, an academic and government venture foiled by the outbreak of World War II (Dugdale, 1937).

While mutual influences can be traced around how the thinking of both Schreiner and Hobson developed concerning imperialism in general and in southern Africa in particular, it was the relationship of such things to war that provided the long-term bond. Both opposed the South African War in very public ways. But unlike many who did so, it later became apparent that they shared absolute pacifist views regarding war generally and rejected any involvement with its conduct. Later, during the 1914-1918 Great War, Hobson was a leading figure in the Union of Democratic Control (UDC) and also an opponent of the introduction of conscription, while Schreiner became involved with the No-Conscription Fellowship (NCF), publishing open letters supporting conscription-resistance in its pamphlet series and also anti-war writings in a journal associated with both organisations, *War & Peace* (Stanley and Salter, 2014: 321-64, Kennedy, 1981).

Another, rather different, influence on Schreiner from Sociology came through the work of W.E.B. Du Bois, which she described as changing the way she conceived of matters

of 'race' and racism. Schreiner and Du Bois never met face to face and do not seem to have had links outside of the impact that reading his *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) had on her. However, Schreiner was invited to and almost attended (again, ill-health intervened) the Universal Race Congress in London in 1911 that Du Bois was an important presence at, and she wrote letters of support and gave her name to various of its public documents (Spiller 1911). So a meeting between them came tantalisingly close.

There were two things in particular that impressed Schreiner about *The Souls of Black Folk*. The first was that Du Bois was clearly her equal in education and insight and his book expressed how he saw and directly experienced the world as a black man. This was something different in crucial respects from how well-intentioned whites (she mentions Harriet Beecher Stowe in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and herself in *Trooper Peter Halket*) represented this, and she thought self-representation of fundamental importance. The second was a longer-term influence, starting with her powerful reaction to one of Du Bois' essay in *Souls*, 'Of the passing of the first-born'. This was written as a bereaved father and, among other things, he comments that his deceased son would never learn to lower his head in the face of prejudice or hatred. The same sentiment had been written by Schreiner some years earlier concerning the death within hours of birth of her daughter, and reading and assimilating it led her to draw direct (both experiential and political) comparisons between the situations of women and black people. Eventually it influenced her thinking about the women and 'race 'questions,' and her analysis of social movements and their challenges to the autocratic forms of governance characterising the imperial powers.

Schreiner's links with some sociologists and sociological writings as outlined here are interesting and suggestive. In network terms, she has clear sociological connections. However, looking more closely suggests that all of them, not just the encounter with Spencer and *First Principles*, became 'transmuted', the word Schreiner used in her 1895 letter to

Betty Molteno referenced above. The abstract systemic approach of *First Principles* became transmuted into Schreiner's appreciation of Spencer as a public intellectual and essayist opposing war, with Schreiner playing a similar public role herself. A shared analysis of imperialism transmuted into her long-term connections with Hobson in the context of both of them having an absolute pacifist opposition to all war. The overlaps between the 'classic' liberal analysis of democracy and imperialism of Hobhouse (Morefield, 2004) and her own more radical stance faded, perhaps not coincidentally with Hobhouse later becoming a supporter of Britain's involvement in the Great War. The conviction that black people should represent their own experiences and that the different social movements for justice and social change shared fundamental human and political principles, brought home by the work of Du Bois, became central for Schreiner and among other things can be traced in her *Closer Union* (1910) and *Women and Labour* (1911), and also her never completed 'The Dawn of Civilization', discussed later.

More Company: Networks or Figurations?

The idea of figurations and figurational or process sociology is central to the work of Norbert Elias (1939, 1970). Figuration is sometimes used – in my view misused - as though synonymous with network and thus being what fills the conceptual divide between the individual on the one hand and society on the other, with figurations seen as the 'small social worlds' of networked individuals (eg. Malerba, 2014: 127-8; Depelteau and Hervonnet, 2014: 179-81, 189-90). There are, however, important network/figuration differences. Figurations involve unfolding processes and flows, and are perpetuations with accruing differences (and shifting power-ratios) over time. But, while some new departures in thinking about networks, in particular actor network theory (Latour, 2007), aspire to similar temporal longitudinality and processual complexities, the mainstream of social network analysis

remains wedded to a cross-sectional ‘snapshot’ approach (Scott, 2012: 139-46). Turning to Elias (1939: 482-3) on figuration, his use of the analogy of a dance in explaining it confirms the difference, for the participants in a dance join and leave although the dancing continues, and they may have little personal or network links with each other apart from their figural presence, their involvement in a shared enterprise.³

Succinctly, networks involve links between persons at particular points in time, while figurations are over time social enterprises with common frameworks which people variously join and leave; and those involved may or may not have shared inter-personal connections with each other but are nonetheless part of the mutual enterprise. Another way of thinking about this is that figurations depend on functional, emotional and dynamic interdependences of a kind that networks need not imply, with Elias (1987) helpfully discussing such matters in his *Involvement and Detachment*. In this connection, Schreiner’s network links with some sociologists and sociological writings have been explored above, but pinning these down is quite tricky, for while the network links are demonstrable, and that they involve sociologists is apparent, they frequently over time transmuted into other kinds of allegiance and association. It is these associational connections of Olive Schreiner’s that are figural in character and connected with but not reducible to her network links that I now want to explore.

Schreiner and Hobson met when he visited South Africa in late 1899 around two closely connected matters, imperialism and the role of international finance capital, and the provocation of war. The context was the events leading to the South African War (1899-1902). For both, there were deeper processes at work and the dynamics involved here also played out in other contexts, not just regarding these particular events. Another close friendship originated at this time and for similar reasons, with exploration of this opening up

³ Elias (2007) on the naval profession provides a detailed example for thinking through figuration/network overlaps and differences.

more of the figurational associations at work. This was with Frederick Pethick-Lawrence, now best known for his involvement with his wife Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence in the women's suffrage organisation, the Women's Social and Political Union, and later as a Labour Government Secretary of State for India. In the run-up to the South African War, Fred Pethick-Lawrence was a newspaper owner and journalist of increasingly radical views and came to know Schreiner in the context of a fact-finding visit to South Africa. Their friendship was maintained through letters, a joint Pethick-Lawrence visit to South Africa, and then after Schreiner's return to Britain from late 1913 to mid 1920, in face-to-face ways.

During the Great War (1914-1918), Fred Pethick-Lawrence became Treasurer of the UDC (in which Hobson was closely involved too) and he was also an opponent of conscription when introduced in Britain in 1916. Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence was one of the few British women who managed to arrive at The Hague for the feminist peace congress that established the pacifist Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) (Confortini, 2012), with Schreiner becoming a member of its International Committee. Schreiner's friendship with Fred was straightforward and admiring, although her relationship with Emmeline had earlier been problematic because of the latter's interjections in South African suffrage matters during 1907-1910 by promoting votes for women there on the 'same terms as men'. In context, this meant a racial franchise, as only white men were fully enfranchised, something Schreiner strongly opposed (Stanley and Salter, 2014: 207-68). However, over the period of the Great War, Emmeline's absolute pacifist credentials stood out and the breach was healed to the extent that Schreiner could see the Pethick-Lawrences' views as largely her own.

Another long-term friendship was cemented by shared opposition to the South African War, with the socialist feminist Isabella Ford, who Schreiner had first met in the 1880s (Hannam, 1989). Ford was even more outspokenly anti-war than Schreiner, which

caused some difficulties regarding both censorship and the effects of martial law for Schreiner during the South African War. Later, Schreiner together with various other radical or liberal South African expatriates supported members of two black delegations to Britain in 1914 and 1919 to protest its unfolding race politics following the 1910 Union of South Africa and the passing of highly retrograde legislation there (Stanley and Salter, 2014: 321-3, 344-8). Ford was one of the few British radicals involved in supporting the delegations' activities and also a wider anti-racist platform. In addition to involvements in both the UDC and the NCF during the Great War, Ford was active in the WILPF and one of a relatively small number of Schreiner's friends to adopt an absolute pacifist stance. 'Lost' friendships with people who stopped short of this and gave degrees of humanitarian and other support to wartime activities included Edward Carpenter, Havelock Ellis, Mohandas Gandhi and Emily Hobhouse.

This was not simply a matter of old friendships continuing or becoming less close, although something of this was involved. It was more that the changed circumstances were responded to by many people as politically and morally *in extremis* ones, and this pointed up levels of agreement or disagreement not fully realised before. This in turn led to the 'transmuting' of relationships, the term used earlier, with Schreiner in each case emphasising figural association and pacifism over network links and sociological connections. As the Great War started, so the divisions quickly became starkly clear between those who objected to particular wars, those who objected to war but accepted aiding combatants in humanitarian ways, and those who objected to all war and rejected giving their support to any aspect. What was revealed, both to Schreiner and to many (former) close friends, was that for her anti-war associational ties had been the basis of many close relationships, but these were sometimes grounded in the misapprehension that the friend in question objected to all war and all war absolutely.

Whether Schreiner's associational tie with Herbert Spencer – founded on his analysis of imperialist autocracy and its provocation of wars and in particular the South African War - might have been loosened or ended in the Great War context, given his somewhat different approach to defensive wars, is merely speculative, as he died in 1903. What is certain is the weakening of a whole swathe of Schreiner's relationships; and of those connected with Sociology discussed so far, only that with Hobson remained strong (another, with Jane Addams, is discussed later). At the same time and in spite of Schreiner's increasingly debilitating heart condition, some older friendships took different form and a range of new associations and related activities came into prominence in her life. The changed character of her relationship with Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence has already been noted around her and Fred Pethick-Lawrence's involvements in absolute pacifist causes and organisations, as has Schreiner's association with Hobson in this regard.

The level of Schreiner's own involvement in pacifist activities is marked. When legislation for compulsory conscription was introduced in Britain, Schreiner was one of the leading figures who published an open letter in the *Times* on 12 January 1916 opposing this and supporting Sir John Simon's attempts to prevent it passing into law, with other signatories including Pethick-Lawrence and Hobson. The impetus here probably came from Bertrand Russell, a high-profile absolute pacifist active across a range of wartime initiatives and organisations (Vellacott, 1981). Russell and Schreiner established a political friendship and he seems to have been a source for some of her information about war matters. Schreiner's relationship with Norman Angell, one of the founders of the UDC and a later Nobel Peace Prize winner, also came about at this time (Ceadel, 2009). This probably occurred through anti-Conscription Bill meetings and is discernible through various lunches and meetings with him noted in her letters and also her publications in the journal that Angell's Foundation sponsored, *War & Peace*.

Schreiner's absolutist convictions and her profound sense of the injustice of military tribunals scapegoating men who resisted both conscription and humanitarian forms of service led her to most closely support the NCF. The analysis in *Women and Labour* of 1911 suggests that if everyone, both women and men, had social care responsibilities, then aggression and violence would decline. However, this stance had given way by 1915, leading to Schreiner's attempt to write the fragmented and barely started 'The Dawn of Civilization, Stray Thoughts on Peace & War,' intended to result in an absolute pacifist analysis of the well-springs of human aggression. By 1915 her conviction, based on many everyday wartime experiences, was that women and men shared equally in animalistic aggression but because of social conventions the expressions of this took different gendered forms. Thus while Schreiner's support for the WILPF was strong and active, this was around her understanding that no special relationship existed between women and peace or men and war.

Many women involved in the WILPF shared Schreiner's absolute pacifism (although not always her rejection of a binary view of the gendered character of aggression and violence), with Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence already mentioned in this respect. Also, high level WILPF members Aletta Jacobs and Jane Addams were friends of Schreiner. Aletta Jacobs was the first Dutch woman doctor and a leading member of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, and she and Schreiner had first met in 1911 when Jacobs was in South Africa as part of an IWSA tour. However, it was Jacobs' absolute pacifism during the Great War that became the prime link between them. The US activist, sociologist and reformer Jane Addams was, with Ellen Gates Starr, the founding presence in Hull House, a centre for social research as well as social reform in Chicago. And here too, it was Addams' role in absolute pacifist activism that formed the major bond between Schreiner and her, not Sociology.

Hull House was closely if uneasily connected with the University of Chicago's Sociology Department, with Addams a charter member of the American Sociological Association and a university extension lecturer on Sociology topics. Hull House personnel and activities received a less than positive response from some male sociologists at Chicago and were side-lined or vanished in various subsequent accounts of Chicago Sociology (Deegan, 1988). However, Addams has more recently been reclaimed as 'key sociologist' (Deegan, 2006) and there is certainly now a greater acceptance of a broad church approach to 'the discipline' and the presence within it of more policy-oriented and social reformist strands, in the UK as well as the US and elsewhere.

However, it was not Addams' Sociology credentials or publications that Schreiner was influenced by and nor does she mention these in her letters. It was instead Addams' absolute pacifism, in particular her leading role in the pacifist movement in the US and also in relation to the WILPF and its Peace Committee (which toured the world successfully commanding meetings with national leaders in many of the combatant countries) that attracted Schreiner. Rather than network links and Sociology, it was the associational connections of absolute pacifism and the international peace movement that led to the flourishing of friendship between Schreiner and Addams and their meetings when the latter was in Britain on WILPF business. Another way of putting this is that, rather than understanding the 'sociology of ideas' in terms of academic contexts, ideas and networks, in Schreiner's case it was instead the political-ethical pacifist connections and the social analysis that went with them which was primary, with intellectual-ethical affinities providing a kind of social glue holding these relationships together.

The discussion so far has brought to sight two strands of important relationships in Schreiner's life, and shown that while there were strong interconnections, these were by no means coterminous. Schreiner's strong analytical inclinations and the range of social and

political concerns that engaged her are clear and there are definite network links with some sociologists and some Sociology key works. At the same time, she had, for instance, very different responses to different components of Spencer's writings and political interventions, and her recognition of important overlaps between her thinking and Hobson's did not lead her to follow his particular intellectual boundary crossings. The developing thread of her intellectual, political and ethical concerns departed from these network connections around her unfolding analysis of social organisation, the economic base, forms of governance, imperialist and autocratic expansionism, and violence and war, with the latter an increasing emphasis from the 1890s on. Regarding this, another set of links developed, with some of the same people and ideas but others too, and these were engaged in concerning associational co-presence, with her Great War relationships with, for example, Addams, Russell and Angell being cases in point.

So how, then, is Olive Schreiner to be characterised in relation to Sociology, its boundaries, domain ideas and people? At this point it is helpful to remember that Herbert Spencer was not only a social theorist but also a prominent public intellectual, and to think about whether Schreiner is 'in' or 'out' when considering that perhaps more porous boundaries existed between public intellectuals and Sociology than did so between Sociology and other kinds of boundary-crossing, such as regarding feminist work.

The Public Intellectual and Public Moralist

In earlier work, I have described Schreiner as a social analyst who was a cultural entrepreneur, someone who used her analytic activities to fuel her active engagement with contributing to processes of change at individual, interpersonal and also social movement levels, particularly in relation to cultural and political domains (Stanley and Dampier, 2012; Stanley, Dampier and Salter, 2010; Stanley and Salter, 2013). She did so around a strong

sense of the need for social justice and equality, with her writing having an emphasis that was both realist and utopian regarding the future, with an attention to the unfolding character and effects of events in the present and how these contributed to this future state. However, Schreiner can equally well be characterised as a public intellectual, positioning herself at the intellectual and political margins, so as to analyse and comment on the social fabric. In her case, these margins were habits of mind rather than the literalist ones sometimes invoked, that the ‘...real or true intellectual is, therefore, always an outsider, living in self-imposed exile, and on the margins of society’ (Said, 1994: 142). In addition, Schreiner can be seen as part of the public moralist discourse that Collini (1993) sees as a prominent feature of British civil society from the 1850s to the 1930s, signifying the existence of an intellectual class, a figurational grouping, rather than particular individuals and their pronouncements.

The figures Collini identifies in public moralist terms are John Stuart Mill, Matthew Arnold, John Maynard Keynes and F.R. Leavis. In the Britain context Herbert Spencer and Olive Schreiner should certainly be seen as among their ranks, as key producers of ideas harnessed to social critique and ethical demands for greater social justice. This is a notion of the public intellectual as not only a public moralist in Collini’s sense, but also as having a *modus operandi* that placed them ‘between philosophy and politics’, to use the sub-title of Melzer, Weinberger and Zinman’s (2003) discussion, and in a context where an intellectual class or figuration was in existence, rather than just lone individuals speaking out.

Achieving the status of a public intellectual and public moralist had already been established at the beginning of the period Collini discusses as something that could be legitimately if awkwardly aspired to and sometimes achieved by women. The novelist George Elliot (Mary Ann Evans) is one case in point, and the journalist and social commentator Harriet Martineau another (Hill and Hoecker-Drysdale, 2003). However, as invoking Martineau points up, women’s presence in academia was another matter, as a still

resolutely male preserve and with Sociology not so much present within as on or beyond the margins and admissible mainly via Philosophy or Psychology. Thus while in the Britain of Schreiner's young womanhood the representative figure of 'the sociologist' was Spencer, Martineau has claims as good as his, as the translator of Comte, author of Sociology's first text on observational methods (*How to Observe Manners and Morals* of 1838), a major figure in publishing popular works of economic sociology both in the *Times* newspaper and in book form (*Illustrations of Political Economy*), and a leading figure in the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science (NAPSS).

In the British intellectual landscape of the 1880s as Schreiner experienced it, it was Spencer and his colleagues and peers around and within the university system who constituted 'the social sciences', including in Schreiner's milieu Karl Pearson, initially a socialist ethicist with an equal interest in German literature, later a mathematician and statistician turned eugenicist (Porter, 2006). Schreiner drew her distance from the concerns and habits of mind thus configured, referring to the aridity of Spencer's social theory, and Pearson's humourless and emotionally-denuded rationalism. In her maturity in South Africa, her relationship to Sociology and the other social sciences was more simple, for while there was some 1900s interest in Comte and Spencer, a course in Sociology was not taught until 1919 (at the University of South Africa [UNISA]) and departments were not founded until the 1930s (Jubber, 2007).

In the contexts of Britain in the 1880s of Schreiner's young womanhood, and South Africa from the 1890s to the 1910s of her maturity, it would not have been possible for her to 'be a (professional) sociologist', then. Nor would it have been possible for her to have had the freer-floating intellectual and academic career of Hobson, moving in and out of academia and working with ideas that could legitimately if controversially cross nascent disciplinary boundaries. In Britain and South Africa, for 'sociologically-minded' and boundary-crossing

women of Schreiner's generation and earlier, the outlets were social reform, and/or a public moralist role, and/or by writing works of fiction. However, although such comments are a useful reminder of academic boundaries and patterned exclusions, confining the discussion to this would beg some important questions and reservations.

Firstly, there is the important matter of whether Schreiner might have ever seen herself as, or wanted to be, part of the configurations of either Sociology or the academia of her day. The evidence firmly suggests no. She had a developed critique of the then current academic way of thinking and deportment, expressed in particular in comments about Pearson's approach, which was not a rejection of analysis but of the particular masculinist mode he represented. Also, apart from late teenage hopes that a brother's foray into diamond-mining might produce sufficient funds to send her to a women's colleges in the US and a subsequent short-lived (for health reasons) attempt to train in midwifery, there is no sign that Schreiner thought of herself in terms of 'a career' outside of writing.

Secondly, there were important gains from Schreiner's position 'outside', a position that resulted from her particular habits of mind as well as barriers of gender and education. These habits of mind are intertwined with the aesthetic and analytical principles set out in the well-known 'Preface' to *The Story of an African Farm*. They involved Schreiner focusing on the everyday and emergent, interweaving emotion and reason, crafting cross-genre and mixed genre ways of writing, combining political commitments with measured analysis, and developing innovative modes of presentation. Recognising this, and thinking about the work of Spencer and Hobhouse in comparison, points up both differences and gains, for it is highly doubtful that Schreiner could have produced and published what she did within the narrower frameworks accepted by Spencer and Hobhouse (and recognising these two were positioned rather differently from each other in time-period and academic location).

And thirdly, thinking about Schreiner *vis a vis* the older Harriet Martineau in Britain and slightly younger Charlotte Perkins Gilman in the US is helpful in considering the role of temporality and context here. Martineau is in some respects a more ‘respectable’ and mainstream figure than Schreiner, because of what was possible for independent women to be and do during Martineau’s young womanhood and maturity, also because of her particular family, class and religious background. Martineau nonetheless was an experimentalist in genre and an intellectual boundary-crosser and achieved considerable acclaim as a writer and public intellectual. But by comparison Schreiner seems less fettered, more wide-ranging; and because of the changing times she moved in, women in metropolitan contexts at least had a wider range choices available than had existed for Martineau. However, the colonial context of the Cape that Schreiner returned to in late 1889, remaining until late 1913, was very different. She experienced it as limited in intellectual and political terms, while a series of events which started with invasion and massacres in the then Matabeleland and Mashonaland by Cecil Rhodes’ Chartered Company (the topic of her *Trooper Peter Halket*) and eventuated in the Union of the white settler states in 1910 and the rapid introduction of racially retrograde legislation, absorbed much of her analytical energy.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman was also an experimental writer and genre-crosser (Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantly, 2013). Gilman, a friend and colleague of Jane Addams, identified as a sociologist, taught sociology courses, published some work in the *American Journal of Sociology* and like Addams was a charter member of the American Sociological Society. However, Gilman’s certainly closer relationship with institutional Sociology was still somewhat problematic in spite of disciplinary patrons who sought to help and promote her and her work. This may have been connected with her allying herself strongly with Lester Ward’s gynocentric ideas about gender relationships, while her ideas about domestic labour failed to reckon with how class and ‘race’ issues made professional

women's liberation reliant on 'specialists' who would carry out childcare and domestic work. However, it was also connected with the US's disciplinary associations, including the American Sociological Society (later Association), being both active and open to women, but with institutional Sociology in colleges and universities still struggling with co-education and its ramifications. The result was that the possibilities regarding Sociology were somewhat greater for Gilman (and Addams) than for Martineau or Schreiner, although jobs and disciplinary acceptance remained elusive.

Clearly 'the times' and the context were important regarding what kinds of boundaries existed, impacting on who was seen as 'in' and 'out', including where Sociology itself was located, as well as influencing these three women's relationships to it. However, associational concerns and habits of mind still have to be acknowledged and reckoned with. Given the importance of both for Schreiner, it is difficult to envisage her wanting to enter the portals of any discipline, let alone any university, while it is extremely easy to imagine an Olive Schreiner without asthma or heart disease as a leading figure in a social movement or political context as well as a public intellectual one.

The Small Matter of 'Forgetting'

Forgetting is something humankind does well: we forget almost everything we have ever done or experienced, and what we do remember is often wrong. However, sometimes forgetting is strongly patterned and maps onto such structural matters as age, gender, 'race' and class. The strange 'forgetting' of the connections of key women producers of ideas with Sociology is one such instance. A combination of the fetishizing of the small handful of 'founding fathers,' coupled with a frequent marked presentism in how Sociology is written and taught, clearly has something to do with it. However, beyond noting the problem, explanations lie outside the concerns of this chapter. What is within its remit, however, is to

emphasise what is lost, lost *to Sociology*, when a producer of ideas of the stature of Olive Schreiner is ‘forgotten’ in the ignored sense. Schreiner did not aspire to be ‘a sociologist’, disliked the academic mode, and her style of theorising traversed genre boundaries; but the power and reach of her analysis, its international significance and close connections with key sociological concerns, ensures that her work remains of high relevance to Sociology. What Sociology was, and where it was located, in the period of Schreiner’s lifetime from approximately 1850 to 1920, is complicated, no matter what inter/national context this is explored from. There is accordingly no good reason to exclude from consideration women such as Schreiner who produced internationally recognised social theory, for her complicated relationship to Sociology and sociologists and even stronger associational concerns and connections is the name of the game, just as with Spencer, Hobson and Addams. Canon-revision needs to open its eyes to such matters.

Acknowledgements

My grateful thanks to the ESRC (RES-062-23-1286) for funding the Olive Schreiner Letters Project. Thanks also to the Sociology Department at the University of Pretoria, South Africa, where these ideas were formulated, to the Sociology Department at the University of the Free State, South Africa where the final draft was written, and to Emilia Sereva from Edinburgh Sociology.

References

- Martin Ceadel (2009) *Living the Great Illusion: Norman Angell 1872-1967* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Peter Cain (2002) *Hobson and Imperialism* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Alice Clark (1919/2014) *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* London: Routledge.

- Stefan Collini (1993) *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850-1930* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Catia Confortini (2012) *Intelligent Compassion: Critical Feminist Methodology in the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom* New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mary Jo Deegan (1988) *Jane Addams and the Men of the Chicago School* New Brunswick, USA: Transaction Books.
- Mary Jo Deegan (2006) 'Jane Addams' in (ed) John Scott *Fifty Key Sociologists: The Formative Theorists* London: Routledge, 3-8.
- Francois Depelteau and Ronan Hervonet (2014) 'The metamorphoses of the dacha' in (eds) Tatiana Landini and Francois Depelteau *Norbert Elias and Empirical Research* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 179-96.
- W.E.B. Du Bois (1903/1989) *The Souls of Black Folks* New York: Penguin.
- J. Dugdale (1937) *Further Papers on the Social Sciences: Their Relations in Theory and Teaching* London: Le Play House.
- Eris Dunning and Jason Hughes (2013) *Norbert Elias and Modern Sociology* London: Bloomsbury.
- Norbert Elias (1939/2000 revised edition) *The Civilising Process* Oxford: Blackwell.
- Norbert Elias (1970/1978) *What Is Sociology?* London: Hutchinson.
- Norbert Elias (1987) *Involvement and Detachment* Oxford: Blackwell.
- Norbert Elias (2007) *The Genesis of the Naval Profession* Dublin: UCD Press.
- Mark Francis & Michael Taylor (eds, 2014) *Herbert Spencer, Legacies* London: Routledge.
- June Hannam (1989) *Isabella Ford* Oxford: Blackwell.
- Michael Hill and Susan Hoecker-Drysdale (eds, 2003) *Harriet Martineau: Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives* New York: Routledge.
- L.T. Hobhouse (1904) *Democracy and Reaction* London: Fisher Unwin.
- L.T. Hobhouse (1911) *Liberalism* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- John A. Hobson (1900) *The War in South Africa: Its Causes and Effects* London: James Nisbet.
- John A. Hobson (1902) *Imperialism: A Study* London: Allan and Unwin.
- Ken Jubber (2007) 'Sociology in South Africa' *International Sociology* 22: 527-46.
- Thomas Kennedy (1981) *The Hound of Conscience: A History of the Non-Conscription Fellowship* Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press.

- Bruno Latour (2007) *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Patricia Lengermann and Gillian Niebrugge-Brantley (eds, 2013) *Charlotte Perkins Gilman* Farnham: Ashgate.
- Jurandir Malerba (2014) 'The new style: Etiquette during the exile of the Portuguese Court in Rio de Janeiro' in (eds) Tatiana Landini and Francois Depelteau *Norbert Elias and Empirical Research* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 127-8.
- Arthur Melzer, Jerry Weinberger and M. Richard Zinman and (2003) *The Public Intellectual: Between Philosophy and Politics* Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Alberto Mingardi (2013) *Herbert Spencer* London: Bloomsbury.
- Jeanne Morefield (2004) *Covenants Without Swords: Idealist Liberalism and the Spirit of Empire* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- John Owen (1975) *L.T. Hobhouse, Sociologist* London: Nelson.
- Theodore Porter (2006) *Karl Pearson: The Scientific Life in a Statistical Age* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Edward Said (1994) *Representations of the Intellectual* New York: Vintage Books.
- Olive Schreiner Letters Online www.oliveschreiner.org
- Olive Schreiner Letters Project www.oliveschreinerlettersproject.ed.ac.uk
- John Scott (2012, 3rd edition) *Social Network Analysis* London: Sage.
- Herbert Spencer (1862) *First Principles* London: Williams and Northgate.
- Herbert Spencer (1902) *Facts and Comments* London: Williams and Norgate.
- G. Spiller (ed, 1911) *Papers on Inter-Racial Problems* London: P.S. King.
- Liz Stanley (2002) *Imperialism, Labour & the New Woman: Olive Schreiner's Social Theory* Durham: Sociologypress.
- Liz Stanley and Helen Dampier (2012) "'I just express my views & leave them to work": Olive Schreiner as a feminist protagonist in a masculine political landscape with figures and letters' *Gender and History* 24: 677-700.
- Liz Stanley, Helen Dampier and Andrea Salter (2010) 'Olive Schreiner globalising social inquiry: a feminist analytics of globalization' *Sociological Review* 58,4: 656-79.
- Liz Stanley and Andrea Salter (2013) 'Olive Schreiner, epistolary practices and microhistories: A cultural entrepreneur in an historical landscape' *Cultural & Social History* 10: 577-97.

Liz Stanley and Andrea Salter (eds, 2014) *The World's Great Question: Olive Schreiner's South African Letters* Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society.

Jo Vellacott (1981) *Bertrand Russell and Pacifists in the First World War* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.